

Paggles

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Thesis Advisor

Sam Minor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Minor", written over the printed name.

**Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana**

May 2013

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2013

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Abstract

Children's printed literature for the purpose of enjoyment became popular in the 1700s, and with modern technology everything seems to be straightforward, perfectly rendered and mass-produced. *Paggles* is an artistic book that combines fine art techniques and computer technology to illustrate an original story. I wrote this story in my senior year at Van Wert High School and when my teacher suggested that I publish it, I took that as a very high compliment and have wanted to pursue that ever since. I have researched children's storybook authors and illustrators both past and present to produce my own unique style using watercolor, micron pen, and Adobe Photoshop to bring my story to life. Then I hand-sewed the book together using techniques from the bookmaking class at Ball State University. This story, combined with the images, generates a play with the imagination while teaching a lesson on the seven deadly sins, which makes it enjoyable for both children and adults.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Sam Minor for his guidance and encouragement not only with this in-depth project, but also through my years as a Visual Communication student at Ball State University.

I would also like to thank my former classmate Ted Hack and Rebecca Brill from the Writing Center for their input and constructive criticisms to help me push this project even further.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to all of the teachers who have pushed me to strive further in the classroom and in life and have encouraged me along the way, they have all had a momentous impact on who I have become today, and I am truly grateful.

Author's Statement

The College Bound English course of my senior year in high school was among the toughest courses I had taken in my four years. Miss Clark had a reputation for being the hardest teacher in the school; she expected a lot out of her students, graded critically, and was strict in the classroom. After we learned about Greek mythology, we were assigned to come up with a mythological story of our own. Imagine my surprise when I received my graded story, *The Fall of Paggles*, and despite the corrections in the notorious red pen throughout, at the top of the page was a note saying, "You should publish this". I took this as a very high compliment, since such remarks from Miss Clark were seldom heard of among the students. I was so encouraged by this comment that I genuinely wanted to publish this story, but was unsure how to go about it. Although several years have passed, I have kept that desire to publish my story and my Honors Thesis requirement presented the perfect opportunity to accomplish that goal while filling a requirement for school. In addition to being a sentimental project, this book will provide entertainment and an important lesson regarding the seven deadly sins to its readers in a unique, stylized fashion.

I decided that turning this into a book for children would be the best solution, but I needed to gather more information about children's literature and what an appropriate style and target audience would be for this story. Although storytelling is timeless, I wanted to take a closer look at the history of printed

children's books that are used for entertainment. Since movable type and mechanical processes for the printing press was not developed until the mid fifteenth century by Johannes Gutenberg, as I have learned in my Graphic Technology courses, books were not mass-produced until well after that period. The idea for children reading for enjoyment was not even suggested until the late seventeenth century by John Locke; people thought it was a crazy idea and it did not start to catch on until after John Newbery published *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* in 1744. Children's literature emerged as an artistic genre through the Victorian Era and the Arts and Crafts movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. Illustrations advanced from monochromatic black etchings to colorful woodblock prints, then color printing offered an inexpensive medium for creating mass amounts of books, and eventually the introduction of photography, and later computers, has made a great impact on illustrations for children's literature. Realizing the impact of current technology on books and so often seeing the perfectly rendered pictures in a genre that is meant to be creative and imaginative led me to decide that I wanted a loose, creative style for my book, where every little detail does not have to be perfect and this will allow the reader to connect with the story on an imaginative and intimate level.

Finding the right age group for my story proved difficult, as I am not around children very much. First, the story I wrote five years ago needed to be edited. Some of the content was not appropriate for children, such the citizens of Paggles all dying at the end, a few details needed expanded upon, and the

vocabulary needed to be simplified. It was recommended to me that I seek out the advice of Professor Pamela Hartman of the English Department at Ball State University as a consult for editing the content of the story. After several emails and failed attempts to visit during her office hours, she replied that children's literature was not her area of expertise and suggested that I make an appointment with the Writing Center, a program by students for one-to-one writing support. After speaking with my project advisor, we decided that taking the story to the Writing Center would be beneficial. I scheduled an appointment with a student that was especially interested in creative writing, Rebecca Brill. She gave me great suggestions for changing the story so that it would be more appropriate for children and ideas for elaborating on the details and dialogue throughout. Afterward, I chose to change the title from *The Fall of Paggles*, to just *Paggles*, since the ending was not so detrimental any longer.

The book is made of mostly pictures, but has a fair amount of text as well, with a linear story to follow. After speaking with my friend's nephew, who is nine years old, I found that he enjoys reading *Captain Underpants*. *Captain Underpants* books contain a lot of text and only a few small illustrations. I had him read the edited version of *Paggles*, and although he read through it quickly, the story is complex enough that he was entertained by it. After searching other books by age group and reading level I concluded that *Paggles* would fit into a six to nine year old target audience, but that the story is intriguing and has a

valuable lesson and, therefore, would be enjoyable to readers of any age or gender.

It was important that I begin sketching my ideas for this book early and abundantly. Drawing from my imagination has always been a struggle. Through my studies and practices as a Visual Communication major, I have completed numerous art projects involving various mediums such as drawing, painting, printmaking, computer, etc. which has greatly expanded my abilities. However, these projects have all been created using real-life subjects; I have always been able to look at what I was creating. I had to do a lot of sketchbook exercises and visual research on gestures and facial expressions to advance my drawings into applicable images. This stage was about exploring different styles and finding what fit best with me as an artist and this story. In the book *Illustrating Children's Books* by Nancy Hands I read, "Good art does not necessarily make good illustration. An artist can paint a beautiful picture of fall trees, but unless this painting makes an idea clearer, it will not fulfill the function of an illustration", so I tried to keep this in mind as I developed my pictures. It was important that the images relate to the text, but I had to keep in mind that children would be the ones making this connection. Each character had to be unique and accurately represent the idea behind him or her, such as the seven people from the mansion each representing one of the seven deadly sins.

I conducted a lot of visual research as inspiration for my images, observing children's books I own, Google image search, and the education

resources section at Bracken Library. The illustrations by Pelagie Doane in the book *Tell Me About God*, published in 1943, I found particularly inspiring. They had a certain relaxed appearance in the images that was achieved by what appeared to also be a watercolor medium. All of these sources helped me to develop the style established in my paintings.

Once the characters were developed and the scene was set I traced each one onto the heavier watercolor paper and outlined them in black micron pen, then painted each picture using watercolor paints. The black outlines give the illustrations a cartoon, caricature impression, which make them pop against the watercolor medium. I chose to use watercolor because this would allow me to easily keep the loose method I desired and it was a process I wanted to explore further. In the past, I have done a couple watercolor paintings, but have never taken a class, so this project allowed me to experiment and see what I can do with these paints. At first I found myself trying to make everything as realistic and detailed as possible, but remembered that was exactly what I did not want to do, so I relaxed and let my paintbrushes get carried away. I wanted to get another artist's opinion on the illustrations, so I contacted a former classmate, Ted Hack, whose work and talent in the drawing area I have always admired, and he gracefully contributed constructive criticisms to give the drawings that extra push and make them stand out.

Once the paintings were to my liking, the next step was to scan them into the computer and add the text. I did this using the program Adobe Photoshop. At

first I placed the black text into the images like so many books I have read, but something did not seem quite right about it. After discussing the problem with my advisor, he suggested getting more playful with the text by changing the color to anything other than black and letting the type interact with natural lines in the drawings, capturing the angles and curves of the drawing in the justification of the text. I decided on a blue text, still dark enough to read, but not as stark as the all black, and I also began playing with how the text was aligned on the page. These details made a world of difference with how the text and images related to one another. Everything was coming together as a whole and the book was finally becoming a reality.

From my experiences printing many projects for my Visual Communication portfolio, I have come to expect something to go wrong while printing and assembling. Thinking ahead to the bookmaking process, I knew that I needed to have multiple signatures to create the Coptic binding. I took my file to the Cardinal Copy Printing Services, and although it took awhile, we figured out the sequence needed to make the correct prints. However, I did not leave enough bleed on a couple of the pages and the text was cut close to the edge of the paper, so I adjusted that before making two more copies of the book. While making the next copies, there was blue ink splatter on one of the pages, a common mishap with a color copier, but the reprint of that page had the incorrect page on the back, which, unfortunately, I did not notice until later and had to go

back to print again. Eventually, I had the correct pages and was able to begin assembling the book.

The art of bookmaking is a process that I have recently taken great interest in with the help of a class in the Printmaking department. There are many tips and tricks to creating a professional hand-made book that I would not have known otherwise. I chose a yellow ochre book cloth as the outer covering, a color that compliments the illustrations. The Coptic stitching that holds the book together has an open spine, a feature unique to hand-bound books, and leaves evidence of the artistic process.

Children's books are a cherished treasure. They tap into a child's imagination and can lead them to a new world, all the while teaching them important life lessons. Overall, I am very pleased with the outcome of this complex project. I have learned a lot about children's literature and it has pushed my abilities as an artist. Having the final piece in my hands and the functionality of it is a great feeling. But, the most rewarding aspect is watching others' reactions as they hold it, interact with it and learn that it was all created by this one person. The final step is locating Miss Clark and seeing her reaction as I give her a copy of *Paggles* and she learns that she is the inspiration and motivation for this project.

Works Cited

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